

Sustaining Effective Programs Even When Grant Funding Runs Out

A Toolkit for Charter School Leadership Teams

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NATIONAL
CHARTER SCHOOL
RESOURCE CENTER



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Introduction

Grant funding and philanthropic support offer opportunities for charter schools to further their mission and serve students, families, and communities through additional staffing, incentives, or programming. However, these funds typically have an end date. Many federal, state, and private grants are limited in the amount of funding they provide, what can and cannot be funded, and in their time frame. Expiring grants create a dilemma for schools: **How can a school leader continue funding these effective programs and positions once grant funding runs out?**

When funding expires, it is important for charter school leadership teams to determine whether grant-funded programs or practices are effective, and if so, build pathways to sustain these programs. Maintaining effective grant-funded programs and avoiding a fiscal cliff are crucial steps for long-term sustainability of a charter school.¹

As illustrated in Figure 1, charter school leaders should consider five key steps to take when determining whether to continue funding a program or practice when grant funds expire:

- Step 1: Prepare for your evaluation
- Step 2: Gather your data
- Step 3: Analyze data to determine the program's impact
- Step 4: Determine costs and next steps for your program
- Step 5: Reflect on the program and your evaluation process

Figure 1. Five Key Steps When Deciding to Continue Current Programs



¹ A fiscal cliff is a financial situation in which a set of financial factors causes or threatens sudden financial decline, such as when grant funding expires.

Using this Toolkit

Charter school leadership teams can use this toolkit and the accompanying [Evaluating and Sustaining Funds Excel Worksheet](#) to help focus on the end goal: How can you determine if grant-funded programs have been effective? And, if they were effective, how can you financially sustain them?

To effectively use this tool, teams should enter information directly into the Excel spreadsheet, which will be referred to as the [Worksheet](#) throughout the toolkit. Look for the PAUSE cue as a reference to when you should pause reading and fill in the applicable portion of the [Worksheet](#).

[Section 1](#) of this toolkit guides charter school leadership teams through the first three steps of evaluating the impact of programs supported with grant funds. For those looking to evaluate a program and determine whether it should be continued, start at Section 1.

[Section 2](#) then presents several approaches and strategies to financially sustain impactful programs. For those who have already gone through an evaluation process for your program and are working to determine how to fund effective programs moving forward, jump to Section 2.

[Section 3](#) closes with considerations for continuous improvement and how you can use the current program evaluation to inform future efforts.

For this toolkit, we will use a math tutoring program for Grade 3 as an example of how to complete the evaluation process. For this example, the tutoring program was started in school year 2021–22 and funded 100% by federal grant funds. This example will be used to show how a team may walk through each step of this process. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a completed example of the “Program Overview” tab that is part of the [Worksheet](#).

Section 1: Evaluating the Use of Funds and Determining its Impact

This section introduces three steps to take to help determine which grant-funded programs were effective and should be considered to continue funding once grant funds expire. This process pertains to programs that will require ongoing costs rather than programs with a one-time cost.

CONSIDERATIONS:

This toolkit is intended to be used when focusing on a specific program originally funded with grant funds. Consider creating a simple calendar outlining what grant funds your school currently has secured and when each expires.

STEP 1: PREPARE FOR YOUR EVALUATION

Step 1: Prepare for Your Evaluation

The first step to take when evaluating the use of grant funds is to prepare for your evaluation. Start by assembling a team, outlining which programs will be evaluated, and creating a calendar or timeline to do this work.

- **Assemble a team:** Before starting your evaluation, consider who on your team needs to be part of the process. This internal team should involve those responsible for making academic, staffing, programmatic, and financial decisions, such as the school or academic leader, operations lead, or finance director. It is imperative that at least one team member has expertise in research and data analysis. If this is not available internally, consider partnering with a local institute of higher education to hire a graduate student intern.
- **Outline the programs to be evaluated:** Focus only on programs and practices that include ongoing costs. Grant funds used for one-time costs or a one-time initiative do not need to be evaluated since they will not have ongoing costs.
- **Create a timeline:** A timeline will help you determine when decisions need to be made about whether to continue the programming. Some programs may have an annual evaluation process already in place to meet grant requirements; however, this timeline should focus more specifically on when your team needs to determine whether to continue programming once grant funds expire. Consider asking:
 - When do your grant funds expire?
 - How does this relate to your larger budget planning process?
 - When does your team need to decide whether to continue funding this program?

Next, scope out the program you will be evaluating by listing the program name, original funding source(s) for this program, and its overall category (e.g., instructional, staffing, mental health). This category may be based on what you use from your grant reports or other tracking process. Grouping costs by category can also help you identify duplicative practices or gaps in meeting the needs of your school. For a full list of example categories of costs, see [Appendix B](#).

PAUSE: Add your information into “1: Preparation” in the [Worksheet](#). Include who will be part of the evaluation team, what program you will evaluate, a simple timeline of when funding decisions must be made, and any other notes applicable to this program.

Evaluation Team	Program(s) to be Evaluated	Timeline	Other Notes
1. School Academic Leader 2. Director of Finance 3. Governing Board Finance Committee	Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant funds expire: September 2024 Budget process: January 2023 to June 2023 (for SY 2024) Decision made by June 2023 	Funded for 3 years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Y1: 2021–22 Y2: 2022–23 Y3: 2023–24

PAUSE: Add your information for Step 1 (Columns B–E) into “Program Overview” in the [Worksheet](#). Include the program name, how this program was originally funded, what funding category this program falls in, and the funding expiration date. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a completed example of the Program Overview tab that is part of the [Worksheet](#). [Appendix B](#) contains a list of funding categories for reference.

Step 1

Program Name	Original Funding Source(s)	Funding Category	Funding Expiration Date
Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program	Federal Grant (100%)	Additional Instructional Time	September 2024

**STEP 2:
GATHER
YOUR DATA**

Step 2: Gather Your Data

In this step, your team will gather the necessary data to determine the effectiveness of the program supported by your expiring funds. **Please note, this process does not replace any compliance/reporting requirements from your funder.**

Revisit the Program Goals and Rationale

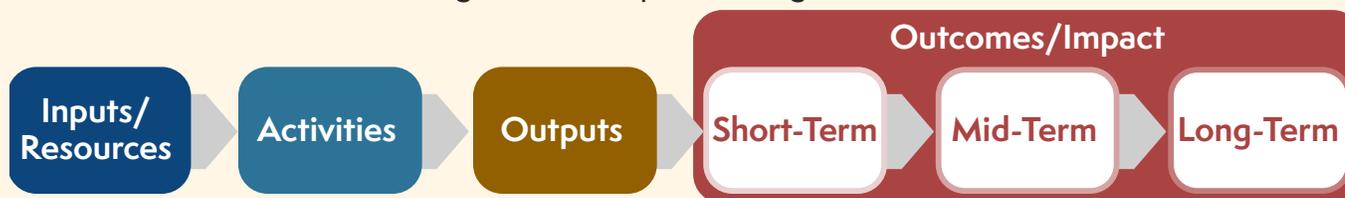
To begin, start by looking at the program you are evaluating and the rationale for the program. A rationale or theory of action allows for a check on whether the practice had the intended impact. Rationales are best developed by a team. One way to articulate a rationale is through *IF, THEN, AND* statements. Have school staff develop a rationale stating *IF* a practice is implemented, *THEN* specific changes in practice will be made, *AND* desired results will occur. As part of the desired results, be sure to state for whom the program will realize these results (i.e., name the specific population to be benefited).

PAUSE: Add your information into the “If, Then, And” table in the “2. Logic Model” tab of the [Worksheet](#).

If	Then	And
Instructional tutoring in math is provided to Grade 3 students identified as economically disadvantaged or a student with a disability	Our students receiving tutoring will have direct, individualized support	Proficiency in math will increase among economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities

After developing your program rationale, it is time to gather data to evaluate if the intended impact was achieved or is on track to be achieved. When gathering data related to the program you are evaluating, it is important to begin by revisiting the logic model and desired outcomes of the intervention. If a logic model was developed, such as the example in Figure 2, revisit the outcomes predicted. Are these still accurate? If not, revise as necessary to measure impact. If no logic model was developed, then consider developing one now using the [NCSRC’s Logic Model Toolkit](#), or developing a rationale using the “If, Then, And” approach above.

Figure 2. Example of a Logic Model



PAUSE: Add the information from your logic model (or create a simplified logic model) into the “2. Logic Model” tab of the [Worksheet](#).

Inputs/Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Staff Professional Development (PD) providers Federal grant funds	Offer summer training and onboarding to new tutors. Provide ongoing PD for teacher tutors.	10 hours of PD per tutor.	By the end of Y1 (2021–22), 85% of tutors report increased content knowledge and best practices for tutoring program.	By the end of Y2 (2022–23), 90% of tutors apply best practices in tutoring program.	By the end of Y3 (2023–24), 95% of tutors use best practices in tutoring program.
Staff PD providers Federal grant funds	Provide students high-quality math tutoring instruction. Offer tutoring to at-risk students.	Provide students a total of 20 hours of math tutoring each month. Provide additional hours of tutoring to at-risk students.	By the end of Y1 (2021–22), the percentage of students proficient in math in Grade 3 will increase from 37% (baseline) to 45%.	By the end of Y2 (2022–23), 57% of students in Grade 3 are proficient in math.	By the end of Y3 (2023–24), 72% of students in Grade 3 are proficient in math.

Identify Data Sources

Once you specify the program’s intended outcomes, identify which data can be used to determine whether the program had its desired impact.

Think broadly about which data could be used as evidence of effectiveness. If you conduct an annual review of this program, consider bringing in relevant data to help with this evaluation process.

Depending on what outcomes you hoped the program would achieve, you can use both quantitative and qualitative data to best determine whether your program met the intended outcomes. Quantitative data are numeric data that allow one to measure and quantify the level of change in an individual or community. Schools already collect a wide variety of quantitative data at the student, staff, and school levels (see [Appendix C](#) for examples).

Qualitative data are non-numeric data more useful in capturing and describing processes, experiences, and individual stories. Such data can include individual interviews, focus group interviews, and open-ended survey responses. Although quantitative data can determine whether a program had a measurable impact, qualitative data could explain why the program did or did not work by identifying mechanisms, explaining contextual factors, and describing impactful practices. Consider how you can include both quantitative and qualitative data in your analysis.

PAUSE: Fill in your intended program goals and data sources you may use to evaluate each program goal in Step 2 of the “Program Overview” tab in the [Worksheet](#) (Column F). Your intended program goals can be pulled from your short-, mid-, or long-term objectives from your logic model. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a completed example of the Program Overview tab that is part of the [Worksheet](#).

Step 2

Program Goals

- Intended Goal 1: By the end of Y1 (2021–22), the percentage of students proficient in math in Grade 3 will increase from 37% (baseline) to 45%.
- Intended Goal 2: By the end of Y1 (2021–22), 85% of tutors report increased knowledge content and best practices for tutoring program.

STEP 3: ANALYZE YOUR DATA

Step 3: Analyze Data to Determine the Program’s Impact

Analyzing effectiveness entails two primary components: (1) measuring whether the intended changes in knowledge and/or behaviors were achieved, and (2) measuring the magnitude of these changes. If there are existing evaluation efforts currently taking place, you may want to leverage these efforts to identify impacts and/or data sources.

The methods used to analyze effectiveness will vary depending on the type of data analyzed and the outcomes for exploration. Just as it is important to identify data sources early in implementation, it is equally important to determine the analysis approach early on as well. Doing so will ensure that data collection aligns with future analyses and will help determine the program’s impact.

CONSIDERATIONS:

If the program did not make the intended impact, is it because of implementation fidelity? If so, would you like to move on or revive the program?

Figure 3 provides an example for mapping out the impact of program goals focused on improving student achievement or instruction.

Figure 3. Example Map of Impact of Implementation: Student Achievement

Category: Student Achievement

Program Name: Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program

Intended Program Goal: By the end of Y1, the percentage of students proficient in math in Grade 3 will increase from 37% (baseline) to 45%.

Math Proficiency EOY 1

Impact	All Students	Asian	Black	Hispanic/Latino	White	Two or More	Students with Disabilities	Econ. Disadv.	English Learners
Earned	65%	75%	68%	63%	65%	70%	34%	27%	54%
Target	45%	75%	65%	60%	65%	70%	32%	27%	67%

Figure 4 below provides an example for mapping out the impact of a program goal focused on coaching instructional staff. For other program goals (e.g., reducing exclusionary discipline infractions), you can collect, record, and analyze qualitative and quantitative data in ways that are useful.

Figure 4. Example Map of Impact of Implementation: Instruction

Category: Instruction

Program Name: Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program

Intended Program Goal: By the end of Y1, 85% of tutors report increased content knowledge and utilize best practices for tutoring program.

Coaching Data Y1

Impact	Year 1, Quarter 1	Year 1, Quarter 2	Year 1, Quarter 3	Year 1, Quarter 4
Earned	65%	75%	78%	87%
Target	85%	85%	85%	85%

Based on the data, determine with your team whether the desired outcomes occurred. For goals analyzed using quantitative data, numbers should show whether the intended impact was met. For other program goals you are evaluating using qualitative data, your team may need to discuss and align on whether adequate progress was made toward the goal to deem the program as effective.

Evaluate the progress made toward each goal to determine whether the program had its intended impact. For only programs deemed effective, you will continue the process of determining how to financially sustain them.

PAUSE: Add the progress made toward each goal (Did Not Meet, On Track, Met Expectation, Exceeded Expectation) in the “3. Evaluation” tab in the [Worksheet](#).

Program Name: Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program

Intended Program Goals	Data Sources	Analysis of Results	Progress Toward Intended Goals
By the end of Y1 (2021–22), the percentage of students proficient in math in Grade 3 will increase from 37% (baseline) to 45%.	EOY state assessment data from all subgroups (2021–22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students: 25% above target Economically disadvantaged students: on target Students with disabilities: 2% above target 	Met Expectation
By the end of Y1 (2021–22), 85% of tutors report increased knowledge content and best practices for tutoring program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching data from 2021–22 Informal and formal observations from program director 	Coaching data: 2% above target	Met Expectation

PAUSE: Go back to the “Program Overview” tab of the [Worksheet](#) and add in information for Step 3 (Columns G and H) to determine whether you will continue to Step 4. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a completed example of Step 3 from the Program Overview tab.

Step 3

Progress Toward Goals	Continue to Step 4?
Intended Goal 1: Met Expectation Intended Goal 2: Met Expectation	Yes

It is important to check on progress made toward achieving program goals throughout the life cycle of your grant. This includes ongoing evaluations every quarter, semester, school year, or relevant time period. In the math tutoring example above, the program goals are currently on track, and therefore this team may decide to move on to Step 4 to discuss how to financially sustain the program. **However, this school team will need to continually reevaluate the effectiveness of the tutoring program in subsequent years to ensure the program continues to be effective and to make adjustments as required.**

Section 2: Financially sustaining effective programs

STEP 4: DETERMINE COSTS AND NEXT STEPS

Step 4: Determine Costs and Next Steps for Your Program

Now that you have figured out whether your program is effective, it is time to determine whether to continue this program. This requires that your team articulates all costs associated with continuing this program to determine whether there is a potential funding gap after grants expire. The following subsection walks you through the process of determining actual program costs, determining if a funding gap exists, and deciding whether and how to cover any funding gaps.

Determine Actual Program Costs

If the program is found to have its intended impact and it is still needed, you will need to identify the costs associated with continuing the program. To do so, it's important to identify all the resources required to sustain the program. This will help you decide *if and how* your school will be able to continue implementing the program. Resources you will need to implement the program include time, talent, and funding.

If you developed a logic model for your program, this would be a good place to reconcile which inputs and resources you estimated would be needed and which were actually required. Here, it is helpful to think about the costs, which may include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, indirect costs, training stipends, and other costs. See [Appendix D](#) for a list of questions and descriptions that may help you outline and compare your projected costs with actual costs to help plan future implementation.

Within the [Worksheet](#), the tab titled “4. Resources Needed” can be used to help map out costs for programs over time. Program costs for the current school year should be based on actual costs incurred. The example provided below can help you detail the cost of continuing the implementation over the next several school years. Depending on your school’s needs, determine how many years your team would like to estimate program costs. Some costs may decrease over time for your program (e.g., first-year purchases, curriculum), and other costs may increase (e.g., salaries for staff members).

PAUSE: Enter your budget information into the “4. Resources Needed” tab of the [Worksheet](#). Add/remove as many columns (for years) as necessary for the program under consideration.

Program Name: Grade 3 Math Tutoring

Resources Needed	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Staffing • 10 tutors @ \$10,000 yearly stipends • Program Lead @ \$20,000 yearly stipend	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Professional Development	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000

Resources Needed	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Technology (student and staff technology provided via other funding)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial purchase @ \$5,000 • \$3,000 yearly subscription fee 	\$8,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Other supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Program Costs:	\$131,000	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$126,000

Once actual program costs have been entered for the current school year and estimated costs have been entered for future school years, determine the estimated cost to continue the program into the next school year once your grant funding expires.

PAUSE: For Step 4a, just enter the cost to continue the program for the following school year under Step 4 of the “Program Overview” tab in the [Worksheet](#) (Column I). Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a completed example of the Program Overview tab that is part of the [Worksheet](#).

Step 4a

Cost to Continue	Funding Gap	Continue? With what funding source(s)?
\$126,000		

Identify Funding Sources to Sustain Effective Programs

Once you have identified the cost to continue the effective program, the next step is to identify what funding sources can be used to sustain this programming. For some teams, it may be helpful to begin by talking about the hurdles to sustainability and discussing at a higher level what approach the team wants to take. A description of common hurdles to sustainability are listed below in Figure 5. For additional information on hurdles and approaches to sustainability, see [Appendix E](#).

Figure 5. Hurdles to Sustainability

Hurdle	Why it is a problem	Solution
Perception that the pie is fixed	Many charter schools and school systems at large assume they have limited financial resources and these resources cannot be spread far enough to sustain new programming.	Schools should think creatively about how to blend and braid available funding, or what new funding may be sought out, including grant programs or community partnerships.
History is a powerful guardrail	Historical patterns create stagnation and lack of flexibility in how funds can be used. Tradition may lead to funding programs without questioning the real impact on students.	Spend time questioning the spending decisions that may have been made in the past.
Siloes and fragmentation	Incrementalism leads to preservation. Staff are unable to think system-wide and feel stuck.	Schools should show their staff that they have a role in the system and help them understand how their role contributes to improving student achievement.

To sustain investments that are working, leaders need to identify new revenue streams or new strategies for using current funds in creative ways.

Consider Available Funding

To begin, consider what funds you currently have available. Blending and braiding funding are two strategies that schools employ to fund programs using available funding. When funds are braided, funding streams maintain their identity, whereas when funds are blended, they are consolidated and lose their individual identity. Depending on the source of your funds, some funds can be blended while others cannot. For additional information on braiding and blending funding, see [Appendix F](#).

Many of these funds, whether federal funds, state funds, or local funds, may be able to be blended or braided in order to provide more funding for effective programs. See Figure 6 for examples of funds that may be eligible for braiding or blending. As you consider blending or braiding funds, keep in mind some fiscal guide rails. Federal funds cannot replace state funds that are available and you must be able to show that more of your state, federal, and local resources are going to students in need. Given these rules, there still may be flexibility with how you may blend or braid funds from one year to the next.

Figure 6. Funds Eligible for Braiding and Funds Eligible for Blending

ELIGIBLE FOR BRAIDING

- Unrestricted state and local funds
- Restricted state funds
 - ESEA Titles I, II, III, IV
 - IDEA including IDEA CEIS
 - ESSER (CARES, CRSSA, ARP) and GEER funds

ELIGIBLE FOR BLENDING

- Unrestricted state and local funds
- -Some restricted state funds (depends on state rule)
- -Federal funds
 - ESEA Titles I, I, II, IV
 - IDEA including IDEA CEIS

Consider Potential Funding

If a projected funding gap persists after considering options for blending and braiding existing funding, consider whether other potential funding streams could be obtained. Although potential funding is not guaranteed, this is an important step for your team to discuss when determining whether an effective program is financially sustainable.

Other Grant Programs

The types of grant programs in your state, district, or community may vary. Funding could also come from philanthropic organizations or foundations, and both private funding or grant funding may be blended or braided with other funding. School leaders are encouraged to reach out and coordinate with their state about other grant opportunities that are available and align with program needs. Many state charter advocacy organizations or other national advocacy organizations provide newsletters or updated information regarding grant opportunities for charters, including the [National Charter School Resource Center \(NCSRC\)](#), which provides updates on funding opportunities on their website.

Form Community Partnerships

In addition to other grant programs, charter schools may consider filling funding gaps by developing and prioritizing community partnerships to help sustain effective programming. Successful community

partnerships can be mutually beneficial. Such partnerships have proven to increase the likelihood of school success and may satisfy time and talent needs in addition to providing funding.² NCSRC’s paper [How Charter Schools Can Leverage Community Assets through Partnerships](#) dives deeper into how charter schools can develop community partnerships to support their students, families, and communities.

For additional examples on how a school may sustain effective programming, see [Appendix F](#).

Determine if a Funding Gap Exists

After both the available funding and potential funding have been discussed with your team, determine whether there is a funding gap. Based on this gap, determine if your charter will be able to sustain the evaluated program. This decision is ultimately up to the team to determine how much of a funding gap, if there is one, is feasible to cover. Although this decision may be a “final” decision within the [Worksheet](#), this may be revisited in future years as the date of expiring grant funds gets closer and as the needs of the school may change.

PAUSE: Enter your available funding, potential funding, the funding category, and the amount of funding per year into the “5. Budget” tab in the [Worksheet](#).

Program: Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program

Resources Needed	Available Funding Title I, Part A	Available Funding Title II, Part A	Available Funding Federal Grant	Potential Funding Local Grant	Potential Funding AmeriCorps Partnership	Total Available Funding	Total Potential Funding	Estimated Cost	Funding Gap (Avail. Funds Only)	Funding Gap (Avail. & Potent. Funds)
2021–22										
Staffing			\$120,000			\$131,000	\$0	\$131,000	\$0	\$0
PD			\$3,000							
Curriculum			\$8,000							
2022–23										
Staffing			\$120,000			\$126,000	\$0	\$126,000	\$0	\$0
PD			\$3,000							
Curriculum			\$3,000							
2023–24										
Staffing			\$120,000			\$126,000	\$0	\$126,000	\$0	\$0
PD			\$3,000							
Curriculum			\$3,000							
2024–25										
Staffing			\$0	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$6,000	\$120,000	\$126,000	\$120,000	\$0
PD		\$3,000								
Curriculum	\$3,000									

² National Charter School Resource Center. (2021). [How Charter Schools Can Leverage Community Assets through Partnerships](#). Manhattan Strategy Group

PAUSE: To complete Step 4, enter the funding gap, either with or without using potential funds, into Step 4 of the “Program Overview” tab in the [Worksheet](#) (Columns J and K). Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a completed example of the Program Overview tab that is part of the [Worksheet](#).

Step 4b

Cost to Continue	Funding Gap	Continue? With what funding source(s)?
\$126,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$120,000 (available funds only) • \$0 (available and potential funds) 	Yes, but ensure to seek out potential funds through local grant and AmeriCorps partnership

Section 3: Reflecting for Continuous Improvement

STEP 5: REFLECT ON EVALUATION PROCESS

Step 5: Reflect on Your Evaluation Process

After completing the process of evaluating the effectiveness of your program and thinking through how to financially sustain it, take time to reflect on how the process felt for you and your team. What other grant programs have expiration dates that are currently funding other programs within your school? Do you have time set aside to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs? If you have decided to continue the programming that was evaluated, when will you re-evaluate? Do you have a plan for an annual evaluation of your program?

PAUSE: Add in your answers to the reflection questions in the “6. Reflection” tab of the [Worksheet](#).

- **Preparation:** Did you have the right members on your team to do this evaluation? Was there sufficient time set aside to conduct this analysis?
- **Data:** Was the data easily accessible? Do you have a system in place to routinely collect data needed for program evaluation?
- **Annual Reflection:** From year to year, was the program effective in meeting preliminary outcomes? Why or why not? How could this be improved going forward?
- **End-of-Program Reflection:** Were you able to assess whether your program was effective? Why or why not?
- **Budget:** What roadblocks did your team hit when determining funding sources to continue your program?
- **Further Evaluation:** When will you re-evaluate this program to determine if it has continued to be effective? What other programs are funded by expiring funds? When will you evaluate these programs and determine how to sustain them?
- **Continuous Improvement:** What lessons did you learn in the evaluation process? How can you apply these lessons to future evaluations to avoid a fiscal cliff? Are there lessons you could share with a broader audience such as other schools in your network or district?

Conclusion

Grant funding offers opportunities to charter schools across the nation to effectively serve students, families, and their communities. However, when grants expire, charters often must figure out how to fund effective, ongoing programs while also avoiding a fiscal cliff. This toolkit provides some guidance to help school teams:

1. Determine if a program had the intended impact, and
2. Identify funding sources to sustain effective programs.

Teams at charter schools must take the time to revisit the intended impact of their programs, determine if they are still needed, and estimate future costs. To sustain effective programming, charters should consider how they may blend or braid federal, state, and local funds with other grant funds or leverage community partnerships. This process of evaluating and sustaining effective programs is just that—a process. The lessons learned through this process can and should be used in the future to avoid fiscal cliffs and to serve students effectively.



Appendix A: Program Overview Example

Included in this appendix is a completed “Program Overview” tab, which is the first tab in the accompanying [Evaluating and Sustaining Funds Excel Worksheet](#) (identified as [Worksheet](#) throughout document) for this toolkit.

Step 1

Program Name	Original Funding Source(s)	Funding Category	Funding Expiration Date
Grade 3 Math Tutoring Program	Federal Grant (100%)	Additional Instructional Time	September 2024

Step 2

Program Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intended Goal 1: By the end of Y1 (2021–22), the percentage of students proficient in math in Grade 3 will increase from 37% (baseline) to 45%. Intended Goal 2: By the end of Y1 (2021–22), 85% of tutors report increased knowledge content and best practices for tutoring program.

Step 3

Progress Toward Goals	Continue to Step 4?
Intended Goal 1: Met Expectation Intended Goal 2: Met Expectation	Yes

Step 4

Cost to Continue	Funding Gap	Continue? With what funding source(s)?
\$126,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$120,000 (available funds only) \$0 (available and potential funds) 	Yes, but ensure to seek out potential funds through local grant and AmeriCorps partnership



Appendix B: Categories of Spending

Categories of spending

It may be helpful to categorize ongoing costs by need or purpose. While there is no requirement to have a cost associated with every category, grouping costs can help you identify duplicative practices or identify gaps in meeting the needs of your school. This categorization is just an example. Feel free to use the categorization from your grant reports, chart of accounts, etc., if easier:

- **Infrastructure and Supplies:** Minor facility repairs, facility upgrades, supplies outside of curriculum and instruction materials, any full-time employee (FTE) costs related to these activities, transportation costs, other operational costs, etc.
- **Curriculum and Instruction:** Curricular resources, professional development for high-quality instructional materials, compensation related to PD or teacher coaching, teacher planning supports, teacher pipeline supports (e.g., grow your own, teacher residencies), any FTE costs related to these activities, etc.
- **Additional Instructional Time:** Before or after-school programs, summer programs, tutoring, any FTE costs related to these activities.
- **Mental Health Supports for Students and Staff:** Counseling services for staff, students, and families; FTE costs related to this category; social services; professional development for staff related to trauma-informed practices and mental health; social-emotional learning and mental health curriculum/programs; etc.
- **Technology:** Campus or local education agency (LEA) hardware or IT infrastructure; software (not related to curricular supports); student devices; costs related to internet access, other technology, and any FTE costs related to these activities in this category.
- **Additional Services:** Parent engagement activities, student advising, interventionists, special education services, nursing, general health services, food services, additional compensation for staff not related to PD or strategic retention, additional enrichment programming for students, any FTE costs related to activities in this category, etc.
- **Other, Not in Above Categories:** Other programs/practices/expenses not included in the categories above.

Appendix C: Examples of Quantitative Data Sources

Figure 7. Examples of Data Sources

Type of Data	Student	Staff	School
Academic	Benchmarks, interim assessment scores, growth on summative assessments, etc.	Teacher evaluation scores	Performance data on annual statewide assessments (e.g., average scores, percentage at grade level, etc.)
Culture	Attendance rates, number of suspensions, discipline infractions, etc.	Teacher retention and turnover rates, staff surveys results (e.g., percentage of teachers expressing job satisfaction)	School rates (attendance, discipline, teacher retention, etc.) compared to district and/or surrounding schools' data
Social and Emotional Learning	Student survey results (e.g., feelings of safety, connectedness)	Teacher survey results (e.g., percentage of teachers expressing burnout)	Student survey results compared to district and/or surrounding schools



Appendix D: Example Map to Identify Costs

This appendix includes an example of the types of resources required to manage a program. Use the following example to help your team think through the time, talent, and funding to sustain the program in question.

Figure 8. Example Map to Identify Costs

Category	Resources Required
<p>Time: What are the main components of the program? <i>Description of key activities and pieces needed for implementation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting and hiring tutors • Identifying program lead • Training tutors • Identifying students for tutoring programming • Scheduling and communications
<p>Talent: Who is involved and what are they required to do to successfully implement the program? <i>Activities of each participant group, including time, duration, and frequency needed for implementation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Lead: Coordinate recruitment and hiring, scheduling, communication, and evaluation. Serve as tech support and coaching support. • Tutors (both internal and external hires): Commit to initial training, monthly training and coaching, and 10 hours a week of tutoring. • Students: Complete 10 hours a week of tutoring program. • Families: Commit to 10 hours a week of tutoring program for students.
<p>Funding: What resources are/were required to implement this program? <i>Staff model and qualifications, pre-assessments, cost, curriculum, class/group size requirements, training manuals, videos, software</i></p>	<p>Staffing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,000 stipend per tutor • \$20,000 stipend for program lead • Professional Development: \$5,000 consultant fee for program lead training <p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chromebooks required for each student: \$0 (provided with other funds) • Curriculum – Tutoring software: \$8,000 initial cost, \$3,000 yearly fee • Other Supplies: • Math manipulatives: \$0 (provided with other funds)



Appendix E: Hurdles and Approaches to Sustainability

Hurdles to sustainability

In order to think about how to financially sustain effective programs, your school team may require a shift in mindset. Charter schools have flexibility to think creatively about how to sustain effective programs by considering new ways to use existing funds, seek out additional funds from other community programs or grants, or partner with other organizations. However, there are common hurdles that often stand in the way of funding programs long term. These perceived hurdles can often be overcome to best serve your students and communities.

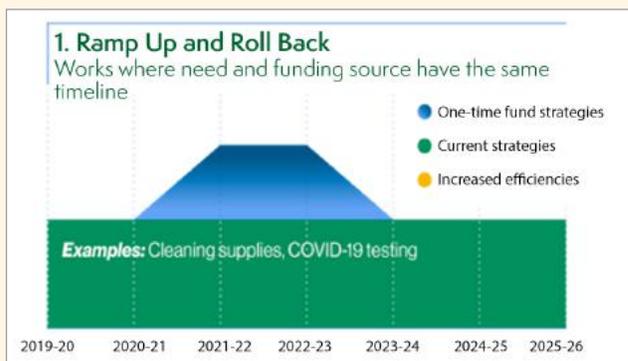
Approaches to sustainability

After evaluating the use of your grant funds and determining the impact of your programs, it is useful to consider which sustainability approaches to take for each program or practice. Figure 9, below, identifies four different approaches to sustainability to consider with your team. Identifying which sustainability approach aligns with your school or team’s mindset will help the team decide how programming may continue over time.

Figure 9. Sustainability Approaches

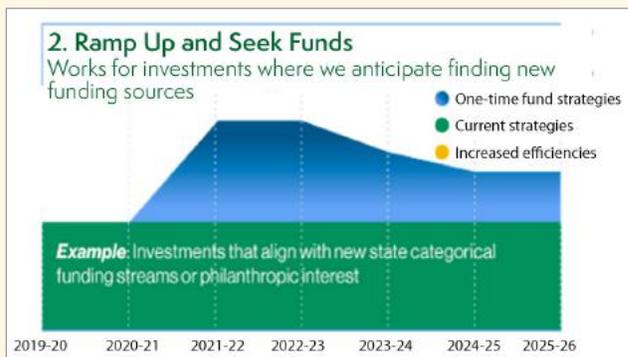
Ramp up and roll back:

The “ramp up and roll back” strategy describes the situation where schools’ programs and funding sources have the same timeline. This means a school is funding a program or practice for a period of time, and then ended the program and the funding at a set date. This strategy is recommended for an immediate and one-time investment such as COVID-19 testing, or masks and other supplies, and likely is not an approach you should consider for programs and practices that you have determined are effective and should be continued.



Ramp up and seek funds:

For ongoing needs that have a positive impact on students, you might also think about seeking and securing new funding sources. These needs might be impactful investments that align with new state categorical funding streams or philanthropic interests, such as seeking out new grant opportunities to replace expiring funds.

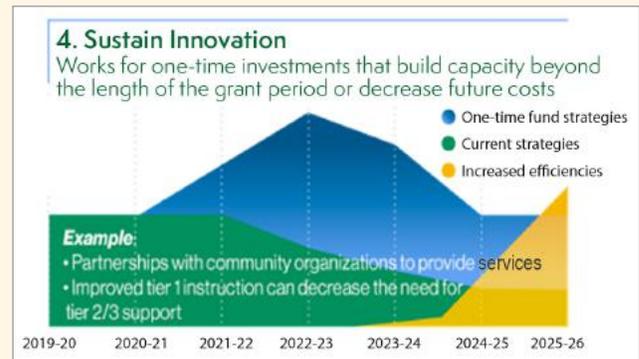


Ramp up and make trade-offs:

In the situation where your programs need to be sustained and new funding sources are not anticipated, you might consider making trade-offs by reallocating funds from less effective programs. This pathway requires more effort in planning and engaging with stakeholders to decide on those trade-offs that benefit students. For example, your current after-school program might be substituted with a 4:1 tutoring program.

Sustain innovation:

School leaders can sustain ongoing needs by making investments to increase efficiencies in capacity building to decrease future costs. For example, a school might invest in intensive professional development programs for new teachers. As teachers' capacity increases, the school does not have to maintain that intensive level of training. Instead, the funding could be used to support the pipeline of recruitment and retention.



Adapted from Education Resource Strategies and WestEd. “Supporting California’s Children Through a Whole Child Approach: A Field Guide for Creating Integrated, School-Based Systems of Care.” April 2022. Chapter 3.

Appendix F: Blending and Braiding Funds

Definitions of Blending and Braiding

Braiding funding refers to coordinating multiple funding streams to fund one program *while maintaining the identity* of each funding stream. Each funding stream maintains its identity when braiding funding largely due to eligibility or reporting requirements for each stream. This means you are using funds in a coordinated way to fund a specific program. Figure 10 below shows a visual of braiding funding streams.

Blending funding refers to consolidating multiple funding streams to fund one program *without maintaining the identity* of each funding stream. Figure 10 below shows a visual of how funds can be consolidated when blending funds.

Figure 10. Braiding and Blending Funds

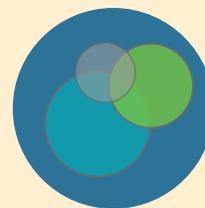
BRAIDING FUNDS

- **Coordinated** to meet one purpose
- Individual funding stream maintains identity for eligibility and reporting



BLENDING FUNDS

- **Consolidated** into one funding stream to meet one purpose
- Individual Funding stream loses its identity



Adapted from Education Resource Strategies and WestEd. “Supporting California’s Children Through a Whole Child Approach: A Field Guide for Creating Integrated, School-Based Systems of Care.” April 2022. Chapter 3.

Examples

Although the context of every state, district, and school impacts how you might consider blending and braiding funds, below are examples of how a charter may consider using funds strategically to sustain effective programming after grant funds have expired.

Example #1: Additional School Counselor

Grantee Context:

- An elementary school hires a full-time school counselor in 2020–21 to serve 500 students with a high population of students from a low-income background. This position was originally funded solely using Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, which expires in 2024. The elementary school has a high proportion of students who are chronically absent, and a population that has experienced a lot of trauma.

“Ingredients List” – All eligible funds over a three-year period:

- Federal Funds:
 - Title I, Part A: *Based on the context of the school, the school is eligible for this funding, which likely is ongoing.*
 - Title IV, Part A: *Based on the context of the school, the school is eligible for this funding, which likely is ongoing.*
 - ESSER II, ESSER III: *Funding available, but expires in 2024.*
- Other Funding Sources:
 - Community Schools Grant: *The school currently has a community schools grant, which expires in 2023.*
- Partner/Community Funding Sources:
 - City and County Funding: *Potential funding could be used from city and county funding the school receives.*
 - Nonprofit Organization Grant: *Potential funding could be sought from local nonprofit organizations that offer grants related to student social and mental health.*

Assumptions:

- Position costs \$150,000 per year (total compensation package)
- Community schools grant will only cover position through FY23
- District has some resources to cover the position in future years

Sustainability Approach:

- Ramp Up and Seek Funds

Funding by Year	Expires?	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Community Schools Grant	X	\$150,000	\$0	\$0
Title I, Part A			\$50,000	\$80,000
ESSER III	X		\$50,000	\$0
City/County budget allocation			\$40,000	\$30,000
Nonprofit organization				\$30,000

Keep in mind:

- This plan braids resources, both federal and state as well as some city/county budget allocations, to support this position through school year 2024–25.
- By shifting more money from Title I, Part A, in school year 2024–25, the school will need to consider what other programs or services may need to be cut to support the additional \$30,000 directed to this position.
- When considering partner or community funding sources, it is likely that relationships need to be developed far in advance, rather than approaching organizations only when funding is needed.

Example #2: Investment in Social-Emotional Curriculum

Grantee Context:

- A school has invested in new social-emotional curriculum to serve all students in Grades K–5. This curriculum will be used by all general education teachers in a specific block of the schedule to provide Tier I support to all students.

“Ingredients List” – Funds available to support:

- Federal Funds
 - ESSER I, ESSER II, ESSER II: *Funding available, but expires in 2024.*
- Other Funding Sources:
 - State/Local Funding
- Partner/Community Funding Sources:
 - National Nonprofit Grants: *School may be eligible for potential grants focused on providing social-emotional learning supports to all students.*

Assumptions:

- The costs of purchasing the curriculum were largely one-time costs at \$5,000. The additional funds needed will only be to support teacher professional development, which will continue to be an investment of time and resources for new hires at the start of the year, and monthly trainings for all staff. These costs are estimated at \$12,000 per year.

Sustainability Approach:

- Sustain Innovation

Funding by Year	Expires?	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
ESSER I	X	\$5,000	\$0	\$
ESSER II	X	\$7,000	\$6,000	\$
ESSER III	X	\$9,000	\$6,000	\$
Nonprofit organization		\$0		\$12,000
Nonprofit organization				\$30,000

Keep in mind:

- For this cost, there is a larger one-time investment in purchasing the curriculum, which does not need to be sustained.
- The ongoing costs related to this example are related to providing professional development to staff.

Appendix G: Additional resources

- Allender, S., & Evan, A. (2019). *[Identifying Promising Practices in Charter Schools: A Framework for an Evidenced-based Approach](#)*. MidAtlantic Comprehensive Center: WestEd.
- National Charter School Resource Center. (2022). *[Accessing Federal Programs: A Guidebook for Charter School Operators and Developers](#)*. Manhattan Strategy Group.
- National Charter School Resource Center. (2022). *[Allocating School Resources to Support Student and School Needs](#)* [Webinar]. Manhattan Strategy Group.
- National Charter School Resource Center. (2021). *[How Charter Schools Can Leverage Community Assets through Partnerships](#)*. Manhattan Strategy Group.
- National Charter School Resource Center. (2021). *[Logic Model Toolkit: A Resource for Current and Prospective Grantees of Charter School Programs](#)*. Manhattan Strategy Group.
- Willis, J., & Krausen, K. (2020). *[Managing Education Resources in Response to COVID-19](#)* [Webinar]. WestEd.